

What is claimed is:

- 1 1. A communication device comprising:  
2 means for interrogating a plurality of wireless network access service providers  
3 to gather information related to service offerings thereof;  
4 means for obtaining a provider selection criterion associated with a user of said  
5 communication device; and  
6 means for selecting a service provider from said plurality of wireless network  
7 access service providers to provide wireless access to a network for said  
8 communication device based on said provider selection criterion and said information.
- 1 2. The communication device of claim 1, wherein:  
2 said means for interrogating includes means for wirelessly transmitting a  
3 separate interrogation signal for each of said plurality of wireless network access  
4 service providers.
- 1 3. The communication device of claim 1, wherein:  
2 said means for interrogating includes means for wirelessly transmitting a  
3 separate interrogation signal for each of said plurality of wireless network access  
4 service providers, said separate interrogation signal including an identifier uniquely  
5 identifying a corresponding service provider.
- 1 4. The communication device of claim 1, wherein:  
2 said information includes information related to a cost of service offered by a  
3 first wireless network access service provider.
- 1 5. The communication device of claim 1, wherein:  
2 said information includes information related to a connection performance  
3 available from a first wireless network access service provider.

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1 6. The communication device of claim 1, wherein:  
2 said information includes information related to a per user bandwidth available  
3 from a first wireless network access service provider.

1 7. The communication device of claim 1, wherein:  
2 said means for interrogating a plurality of wireless network access service  
3 providers includes means for measuring a connection bandwidth associated with a first  
4 wireless network access service provider.

1 8. The communication device of claim 1, wherein:  
2 said means for interrogating a plurality of wireless network access service  
3 providers includes means for requesting a relatively short duration connection from a  
4 first wireless network access service provider to allow a connection bandwidth of said  
5 first wireless network access service provider to be measured by said communication  
6 device.

1 9. The communication device of claim 1, wherein:  
2 said means for obtaining a provider selection criterion includes means for  
3 retrieving said provider selection criterion from a memory within said communication  
4 device.

1 10. The communication device of claim 1, wherein:  
2 said means for obtaining a provider selection criterion includes means for  
3 prompting a user of said communication device for said provider selection criterion  
4 using an input/output device.

1 11. The communication device of claim 1, wherein:  
2 said means for obtaining a provider selection criterion includes means for  
3 reading said provider selection criterion from a removable memory card.

1 12. The communication device of claim 11, wherein:  
2 said means for reading includes means for reading said provider selection  
3 criterion from a subscriber identification module (SIM).

1 13. A method for procuring wireless access to a network for a communication  
2 device, comprising:

3 identifying a plurality of network access service providers that are currently  
4 servicing a present location of the communication device;

5           interrogating said plurality of network access service providers for information  
6    using a wireless interrogation signal; and

7        selecting a service provider from said plurality of network access service  
8 providers based on said information and a selection criterion.

1     14.     The method of claim 13, wherein:

2 identifying a plurality of network access service providers includes transmitting  
3 at least one inquiry signal and receiving response signals from at least two network  
4 access service providers.

1 15. The method of claim 13, wherein:

interrogating includes transmitting a first wireless interrogation signal to a first network access service provider, said first wireless interrogation signal including an identifier uniquely identifying said first network access service provider.

1    16.    The method of claim 13, wherein:

2           interrogating includes transmitting a first wireless interrogation signal to a first  
3   network access service provider, said first wireless interrogation signal requesting  
4   information related to a cost of service associated with said first network access service  
5   provider.





12 a selection function to select a service provider from said plurality of  
13 network access service providers based on said information received by said  
14 interrogation function and a provider selection criterion.

1 27. The communication device of claim 26, comprising:  
2 a memory to store said provider selection criterion, wherein said selection  
3 function retrieves said provider selection criterion from said memory for use in  
4 selecting said service provider.

1 28. The communication device of claim 26, wherein:  
2 said selection function prompts a user of said communication device for said  
3 provider selection criterion using an input/output device of said communication device.

1 29. The communication device of claim 26, wherein:  
2 said mobile client further includes an identification function for identifying said  
3 plurality of network access service providers that are active in said vicinity of said  
4 communication device for use by said interrogation unit.

1 30. The communication device of claim 26, comprising:  
2 a memory including a list of network access service providers that provide  
3 network access services to the public, said plurality of network access service providers  
4 that are active in said vicinity of said communication device representing a subset of  
5 said service providers on said list.

1 31. The communication device of claim 30, wherein:  
2 said list of network access service providers includes a radio network name for  
3 each of said network access service providers.